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UNCLAS DAR ES SALAAM 000637

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

KAMPALA FOR GEORGE FREDERICK; NAIROBI FOR BILL LEHMBERG;
PRM FOR WENDY HENNING; AF/E FOR BARBARA YODER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREF PREL PHUM TZ
SUBJECT: FALSE HOPE AND TOUGH TALK; REFUGEE UPDATE FROM
TANZANIA

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: As the UNHCR consolidates and closes refugee camps in western Tanzania, requests for assistance in host areas and in closed camps are increasing. Repatriation to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is on the upswing, while repatriation to Burundi has come to a halt, with perceived political insecurity the leading cause. The process for resettling a pre-identified group of Burundians continues and is on schedule despite construction delays; other refugees continue to hope they also can be resettled in the United States. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Poloff participated in a UNHCR-organized mission to Kigoma, Kasulu and Kibondo April 18-21, 2007, to review repatriation and resettlement activities and camp consolidation in western Tanzania. Poloff also consulted with implementing partners and Government of Tanzania (GOT) officials in the region. Led by Ambassadors Wolfgang Ringe of Germany and German Zurita De Navarrete of Spain, the mission also included: Reid Sirrs, Head of Development Cooperation, Canadian High Commission; Theo Kaspers, Governance Advisor, European Commission; and host Yaccoub El Hillo, Representative, UNHCR.

Camp Infrastructure and Requests for Assistance: Brace for Impact

¶3. (SBU) The GOT is learning to "be careful what you ask for" as refugees return, camps close, and international assistance in the area decreases. Accordingly, local government and community requests for donor assistance with projects in refugee host areas, and now also in closed camps, are on the rise. Said R. Bwanamdogo, District Commissioner of Kasulu, presented the mission with a plan of how to utilize the structures which will be left in Muyovosi camp, and corresponding requests for assistance to improve them. The plan to use the inherited structures as education institutions, a health center and a police post included requests for construction of housing for teachers, hospital staff and police officers, as well as laboratories and student dormitories.

Resettlement: False Hope Continues

¶4. (U) Processing is underway for the approximately 9,000 refugees eligible for group resettlement to the United States--Burundians who fled in 1972 to either Rwanda or Zaire, and then to Tanzania in either 1994 or 1996-1998 due

to conflict in those countries. The resettlement facility in Kanembwa camp is operating, but not at full capacity due to construction delays. The construction contract called for completion on April 17, but has been extended to the end of May. The x-ray machine for medical clearances is installed, in use and needed repairs were completed successfully on April 20. Projected departures to the US remain 400 refugees in June, 900 in July, 800 in August and 500 in September, for a total of 2,600 in FY07.

¶5. (U) Refugees not in the group recommended for resettlement to the United States continue to maintain false hope their turn will come. When addressing refugee leaders in Muyovosi camp in Kasulu, the GOT regional immigration officer concluded his remarks by saying that the USG is resettling Burundian refugees but did not clarify this is only for a limited, closed group. Following the applause and cheers of the refugee leaders at this news, Poloff explained the process for, and limitations of, group resettlement and clearly stating the USG is not planning additional group resettlements of Burundian refugees, silencing the crowd of approximately 200.

Repatriation to DRC: Tough Talk from UNHCR

¶6. (U) UNHCR Representative Yacoub El Hillo spoke frankly to refugee leaders in the Congolese Lugufu camp, indicating UNHCR's shift from facilitated to promoted return in everything but name: "Staying in Lugufu your whole life is not possible; resources were cut in 2007 and will be cut again next year; the solution is in Congo; going home is the best thing." In response to refugee leaders requests for increased food distribution, shoes, school uniforms, medical treatment and non-food items, El Hillo said the people who came to Tanzania for protection should not stay for

assistance; otherwise, they become economic immigrants. El Hillo cautioned against falling into the trap of depending on assistance, stating "you can't be a refugee forever," and appealed to the refugee leaders to be advisors and examples.

Repatriation to Burundi: Politics Trump Food Insecurity

¶7. (U) Burundian repatriation has come to a halt, despite urgings from the GOT and the international community. At a gathering with Muyovosi refugee leaders, mission participants repeated that Burundian refugees should return home and El Hillo cited a survey of recently-returned refugees to alleviate fears of insecurity and scarce land. The survey, released April 19, reveals that 93% of the returned refugees surveyed said the security situation was "very good," 89% owned their house, 82% owned their land, and 97% were "very happy" they returned home. Time will tell if these numbers convince more refugees, including the high school student who told Poloff he is not considering returning to Burundi because he "knows in his heart there is no peace there."

The 1972 Caseload: Work Remains

¶8. (U) GOT officials continue to request, and some officials expect, international assistance for the 1972 Burundians living in settlements, not camps. Mr. Steven Daniel, MHA regional representative in western Tanzania insisted that the international community must assist the GOT regarding this "1972 caseload." When Poloff asked the basis for this position Daniel replied "because they are not Tanzanian."

¶9. (U) UNHCR "hopes to develop a comprehensive solutions strategy" for the 1972 caseload as part of the end-game for Burundian refugees in Tanzania, according to UNCHR Deputy Representative Steven Corliss. UNHCR hopes this strategy will include an opportunity for local integration, but the GOT has yet to commit to such an approach.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) To encourage repatriation and avoid contributing to the false hope that more refugees may qualify for group

resettlement, the fact that the USG is not considering additional groups of Burundians for resettlement to the US needs to be communicated clearly by USG officials. Post also recommends the USG nudge, not urge, the GOT to consider local integration for the 1972 caseload.

¶111. (SBU) While the GOT's plans to make use of inherited structures is a step forward, we need to encourage local government officials to move forward with their plans to utilize inherited infrastructure in the closed camps without delay. The structures can be used as they are, and waiting for assistance or the next GOT budget cycle will only result in lack of maintenance and possible destruction of the structures, most of which are temporary or semi-permanent.

END COMMENT

RETZER